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RATIONAL SUNDAY OBSERVANCE.

THE first thing to be said about the observance of the Sabbath is that, among Christians, there is no Sabbath to be observed. When people talk about the Sabbath, they are, for the time being, Jews. Only in England and America, among the descendants of the Puritans, and only in religious phraseology, is Sunday called the Sabbath. Somehow, in this country, it is supposed to be a little more religious to say "the Sabbath" when Sunday is meant. A man, in speaking to his neighbor in the street, says, "Sunday," but in speaking to his minister he says, "the Sabbath." I should like to send these Sabbatarians to Italy, where the name of Saturday is "Il Sabato" and that of Sunday "Il Domenico." If, in that country, they advertised their meetings for "the Sabbath," as they do here, they would find that every one who came would come on Saturday.

This is more than a question of words. When a certain portion of the Christian Church constructed the theory that the fourth commandment was of perpetual obligation, only that the observance of the Sabbath had been transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week, their object was to give a sacred obligation to the performance of certain ceremonial duties, and to make of Sunday-worship a kind of sacrament. This has been taught and accepted among the descendants of the Puritans down to the present time. Men have abstained from their common labors, and have attended public worship, because they regarded this as a religious duty, done not for their own benefit but in obedience to a divine command. And no doubt this theory of Sunday observance was well adapted to cause a universal and strict obedience to what God was believed to command or to forbid on this day. When we speak of God's day, God's house, and God's Word, we give an authority to Sabbath-keeping, Church-going, and Bible-reading, which

they would not otherwise possess. Take away that authority, let it be understood that we go to church for our own sake and not to please the Almighty, and that we have a right to do anything on Sunday which rests and refreshes body and soul, and no doubt there will be a great falling away from what is called "the religious observance of the Sabbath."

This may be a bad thing, or it may not ; but, whether the results of telling the truth seem to be good or bad, the truth ought to be told. Yet, when the Lord's day is placed on its true foundation, it will probably be better kept than it is now. The people of New England have been trained up in the belief that Sunday was the Sabbath, and that God has commanded it to be kept holy for ever. At first, and for a long time, the result of this teaching was, that every one abstained from work and amusement, and every one who was able went to church or meeting. But this is not the case now, even in New England. The statistics of church-going show that only a small part of the community, at least in large towns, attend public worship, and that to many it is a day of idleness or of pure amusement. The old belief in the Sunday as the equivalent of the Sabbath is gone, and can not be restored. Would it not be better to put it on another and better foundation ; to elevate it from a Jewish to a Christian institution ; to show that it only becomes God's day by being man's day ? If this is true, it will be sure to be also useful ; for the truth is a tree which always brings forth good fruits.

Scholars are now generally agreed that the Sabbath obligation was *not* transferred by Christ or his apostles to the first day ; that there is not in the Christian Scriptures a single command to keep the Sabbath in any form or on any day ; and that nearly all that is there said about the Sabbath is to deny its obligation. Jesus himself openly and repeatedly violated not only the Pharisaic Sabbath, but that of Moses. When reproved for it, he did not defend himself on the ground that he was not breaking the Mosaic Sabbath, but rather because he had a right to work on that day as the Son of man, the representative of humanity. He did not say, "The Son of God is Lord of the Sabbath," but "The Son of man is master of the Sabbath, since it was made for the good of man." It is also noticeable that he took away the very foundation of the Jewish Sabbath as a positive religious ordinance, by denying that God *ever* rests. "My Father works hitherto [down to this time, always], and I work." Jesus plainly taught that the mode of observing

even the Jewish Sabbath was to be determined by human uses ; that whatever was really good for man might be done on that day. It is not necessary to quote the passages in which Paul expressly denies the binding obligation of the Jewish Sabbath. The latest authority (Smith's "Dictionary of Christian Antiquities") says that St. Paul's words (Coloss. ii, 16, 17) are "absolutely decisive," as well as those addressed to the Galatians (Gal. iv, 10), that "the obligation to observe the Sabbath according to the Jewish law was never, in any sense, binding on Christians." The writer of this article (Rev. Alfred Barry, D. D., Principal of King's College, London, and Canon of Worcester) also says : "The notion of a formal substitution, by apostolic authority, of the Lord's day for the Jewish Sabbath, and the transference to it, perhaps in a spiritualized form, of the Sabbatical obligation established by the promulgation of the fourth commandment, has no basis whatever, either in Holy Scripture or in Christian antiquity." He adds that "the idea afterward embodied in the title of 'the Christian Sabbath,' and carried out in ordinances of Judaic rigor, was, so far as we can see, entirely unknown in the early centuries of Christianity."

No doubt, the belief was constant that all that was divine in the law was fulfilled in the gospel. But no one supposed that the Sabbath of the law was fulfilled by another outward Sabbath of a seventh-day's rest. The outward rest of the Jewish Sabbath was fulfilled in the gospel by an inward rest of the soul, resting from anxious effort in a confident faith. This is the only Christian Sabbath mentioned in the New Testament. The only place where Sabbath-keeping is spoken of except to be condemned, is in the Epistle to the Hebrews (iv, 9) where it is said that "there remains a Sabbath-keeping to the people of God." But the context shows that this Sabbath-keeping is the spiritual rest of the soul, which belongs not to one day but to all days. The idea of the Christian Sabbath is not the celebration of any particular day, but a rest from spiritual anxiety and struggle. This idea prevails in the writings of all the early Church fathers. Athanasius says, "We keep no Sabbath-day, but look forward to the Sabbath of Sabbaths in heaven." Epiphanius says the Jews have their "little Sabbath," but we our "great Sabbath," which is "rest from our sins." St. Jerome affirms that "all days are the same to a Christian." St. Augustine plainly declares that there is no obligation on a Christian to keep any Sabbath. In Christianity, he says, "the observation of that kind of Sabbath which consists in the rest of a single day

is no longer a duty for the faithful." In speaking of the commandments he says that, while all the rest are to be obeyed literally, the fourth is to be obeyed only as a figure. And though a tendency to Sabbatize soon began to come in, it was resisted by the most eminent teachers, and is said not to have been complete till the time of Charlemagne. It was not till the twelfth century that we find the phrase "Christian Sabbath" applied to the Lord's day. Dr. Barry, concluding his article on the Lord's day, says that "the connection of its observance with the fourth commandment rests on no Scriptural and no high ecclesiastical authority." The same result is reached by Dr. Hessey, in his Bampton Lectures before the University of Oxford, in 1860.

The reformers were nearly unanimous on this point. Dr. Hessey says that "Sabbatarianism of every phase was expressly repudiated by the chief reformers in almost every country (even by Calvin, the friend of Knox, and by Knox himself, who is supposed, though incorrectly, to have introduced it into Scotland), and it does not appear in the fully authorized documents of the Church of England." Luther's well-known passage in the "Table-Talk" is very strong: "If anywhere the day is made holy for the mere day's sake, if anywhere any one sets up its observance on a Jewish foundation, then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it, to do anything that shall remove this encroachment on Christian liberty." The "Augsburg Confession," prepared by Melancthon for the whole Protestant communion, says, "Those who judge that in the place of the Sabbath the Lord's day was instituted, as a day to be necessarily observed, are greatly mistaken."

But if the force of evidence thus compels us to renounce placing the observance of a day of rest on the ground of a positive divine command, by what principle can this observance be maintained? There evidently remains, for the Protestant, nothing but the argument of its utility, or necessity for the good of man. If we can not any longer consider it as God's day, we must defend and maintain it as man's day. Is this foundation strong enough to support it? Is the use of the first day as a time of rest, of worship, and moral recreation, likely to continue, the authority of a religious law being wholly taken away?

I believe that this basis will be sufficient, and that the Lord's day will always continue a day of rest, though there may be changes in the mode of its observance.

There was no other ground for it at first. Sunday was observed in the beginning, as we have seen, with no reference to the Sabbath or the fourth commandment. It sprang up because it was needed, it spread because it was found useful and good. It was not protected by positive legal enactments till the time of Constantine. During the first three centuries of Christianity the habit of resting from usual labors and meeting for worship grew, until it became universal, not because of any divine command, not as an apostolic institution, but because it was in accord with Christianity and with human nature. Civilized man *needs* just such a period of relaxation and refreshment ; and, as long as he needs it, he will certainly continue to have it.

And this need does not diminish, but increases, with the progress of civilization. The most advanced nations of the world need this rest the most, because they work the hardest. Competition becomes more intense, the strain on the nerves more exhausting. Though, by means of machinery, more is produced, yet the wants of society increase yet more rapidly. What was once a luxury soon becomes a necessity. Living in the midst of this vital tension we are not aware of it, but it necessitates every year longer vacations, more numerous holidays, and it makes one day of rest in seven wholly indispensable. If it could *ever* have been abandoned, it certainly can not be relinquished now.

With the increase of education, the Sunday rest becomes yet more necessary. When the mind has been once aroused to activity, it can not do without some food ; and so the Sunday becomes more and more a day for popular education. Those who go to church demand some mental excitement and instruction from the sermon and the other services. The opening of city libraries, art museums, public gardens, zoölogical gardens, and concerts, is furnishing constantly new sources of education, as well as refreshment, for the laboring classes. The hard-working man, who has no other time for mental improvement, can, least of all, dispense with these opportunities. The rich man can have them every day, the poor man only on the day of rest.

Such recreations as these are themselves an education. What a refreshment to worn-out bodies and minds are the great parks in and near our cities, where hundreds of thousands of people enjoy, on summer Sunday afternoons and evenings, the sight of grass, flowers, statues, sky, and sea ! More of this is wanted, and not less. Who can see the immense throngs of people at Manhattan

Beach, Coney Island, of a hot Sunday—sitting, walking, bathing, listening to music, and dining at tables set on piazzas in the open air—without rejoicing at their having such an opportunity? The writer last summer walked all one Sunday among these crowds, without seeing a drunken man or hearing a violent word. Scenes of drunkenness, debauchery, and riot occur, not usually in the open air and in the midst of multitudes, but in the dark lanes and cellars of a city.

“But we do not want a Continental Sunday,” it is said. I remember that many years ago I passed a Sunday in Zurich, a Protestant city, and attended church early in the morning, in the cathedral of Zwingli, which was filled with a large congregation. In the afternoon I walked to the Uetliberg, and saw thousands of the people going and coming, along the many beautiful promenades which surround the city. Men, women, and children walked together, or sat at tables under the vines, drinking their beer or coffee. But all was peaceful, quiet enjoyment. And I thought, “If this is what is called a Continental Sunday, how much better it is than the gin-shops of London, or the Sunday riots and murders in New York !”

Dr. Guthrie, an eminent Scotch Presbyterian,* says : “We counted on one occasion, in Paris, thirty-three theatres and places of amusement open on the Sabbath-day. Coming home, in one hour we saw in London and Edinburgh, with all her churches, and schools, and piety, more drunkenness than we saw in five long months in guilty Paris.” I also quote from Mr. Garrett’s tract what an English writer, Rev. John Woolley, says of a Sunday in Munich :

“The city of Munich is, as all the world knows and none better than its citizens, unrivaled in its beer. But on Sundays, though the beer-alleys are in the open air, the quiet, as compared with an English holiday, is most striking. The cause is easily given. During the day all the churches are crowded to suffocation ; in the evening, from about six to dark, two bands of music play in the pretty ‘English Park,’ which is crowded by promenaders of every degree, from the royal family to the humblest handicraftsman. There are tables and booths around, where coffee and ices may be procured at a low price ; and many Munich families take, in this way, their evening meal. Nothing can exceed the picturesque beauty of the scene

* Quoted by William C. Garrett in “The Workingman’s Sunday.”

except its moral beauty. We often sadly contrasted the cheerful, contented faces around us with the haggard, care-worn look of the same classes of our countrymen—often wished that we, too, were taught to worship God with the natural homage of thankful enjoyment. . . . For the upper classes, we are sure that the self-denial, if such it is, of spending some part of this holy day in friendly intercourse with their poorer neighbors will be amply repaid by its influence on themselves and those they seek to benefit.”

Parks and public gardens, and watering-places like Coney Island, near New York, and Revere Beach, near Boston, are excellent for the people in the summer. But how shall they pass the winter days and evenings? They can not be at church all day. Why should there not then be, connected with the churches, public halls, open to all who behave decently, where the working-people can go—men, and women, and children? There might be music, pictures, reading-rooms with newspapers, coffee-rooms, and places for conversation. Suppose that every church in each of our great cities should open such a building—both for Sunday and week-day evenings—would not their usefulness be immeasurably increased?

For the individual, who wishes a rule by which to guide his own action, this is sufficient; whatever rests and refreshes us is right, what weakens and dissipates our powers is wrong. But it is not so easy to decide what should be the universal custom, and still less to say what ought to be allowed or prohibited by law.

Many persons ask, and with apparent reason: “What right has the law to interfere at all? There is no established religion in this country; Church and state are here wholly separate. Why, then, should the state perpetuate the Jewish Sabbath, and forbid men from working, if they like, on Sunday? Why undertake to decide what amusements may be allowed, and what not? Why close theatres, for example? Theatres are permitted on Sunday evening in those countries which have a state religion; why forbid them by law here, where the state professes to have nothing to do with religion?”

The answer to this is, that the state has a right to do, and ought to do, what is believed by the large majority to be for the best good of the community. Every one is taxed to support public schools, because the great majority think them necessary to maintain republican institutions. Yet many persons may find it hard to be taxed for the schools. They have no children; or, they send them to private schools or to church schools—why should they have

to pay for the public schools too? The answer is: In a republic where the majority rule, you must accept what they think necessary for the public good, unless where the Constitution protects you against any excessive exercise of such a power.

The fact that Sunday laws are maintained in all the States of the Union shows that the great majority of the people believe that Sunday should be a day of rest. Without such laws it could not be so preserved. Great corporations, having no souls themselves, would not think it necessary to care either for the souls or bodies of their workmen. The laboring man needs the rest of Sunday more than any one else. Others can rest, if they please, on other days; he can only have a holiday once a week, under the protection of law. Without such law, the greed of money-making would cover the whole year with unbroken, unremitted labor.

The Sunday laws are much the same in all the States, and all forbid both labor and amusement on the Lord's day. In Massachusetts the existing law (last adopted in 1860) forbids opening shops or workshops, doing any work, except of necessity or mercy, being present at any public diversion, taking part in any sport or game, except a concert of sacred music, traveling, unless for necessity or mercy, serving civil process, disturbing public worship, shooting birds, or catching fish. These laws are continually and openly violated, are scarcely known to the people, and very much perplex the courts that are called to adjudicate cases arising under them. Thus Chief-Justice Gray, of Massachusetts, in declaring what technical meaning must be put on the word "travel" in the statute, gave as his opinion that "a person walking with a friend on Sunday evening less than half a mile, with no apparent purpose of going to or stopping at any place but his own home, much less of passing out of the city, and no object of business or pleasure except open air and gentle exercise, is not guilty of traveling or liable to punishment under this act." It would seem that the law should be modified, when a wise and liberal judge is forced to construe it thus strictly.

The great majority of the people of the United States also believe that the public worship of God, public reading of the Scriptures, public instruction in religion and morality, are important aids, at least, in maintaining the welfare of the community. If the churches were closed, the morality of the New Testament no longer taught every week from a hundred thousand pulpits, if on every returning Sunday men were no more reminded of God, duty, and

immortality, a vast influence for virtuous conduct would be taken away. It is on this ground that the state has a right to make laws to protect and encourage the religious worship of all denominations and all religions. Any religion which continually reminds men that they have immortal souls, and that they are responsible to God for their conduct, is an advantage to the community. The sound of a church-bell, the music of an old psalm-tune, awaken associations and memories which make all men better. "As I was walking in my garden at Malmaison," said the first Napoleon, "I heard the distant sound of the church-bell at Rueil, and I stopped, moved involuntarily by old associations. If I, a man like me, am so affected, how much force must such influences have on the mass of mankind!"

If the Church, instead of following blindly its old forms on Sunday, shall consider seriously how to modify, enlarge, and improve its work, then, like its Master, it will be once more "Lord of the Sabbath." The day has now half escaped from its hands; let it hasten to recover its hold. When the community finds that the churches are meaning to furnish the greatest possible amount of education, good influence, and innocent happiness on this day, they will gladly again accept its leadership. Instead of the religious influence of Sunday being diminished, it will be largely increased by such a change. If the Church takes charge of the whole day—devoting the morning to worship and religious teaching, the afternoon to works of charity and instructive lectures, and the evening to social meetings and innocent recreation—then the whole day will be sanctified and become altogether the Lord's day.

Every such attempt to provide innocent recreation for the community on Sunday will be opposed, and honestly opposed, on the ground that it will interfere with church-going. The reply is, first, that there are multitudes who have abandoned church-going—multitudes who never now put their foot into a church. Since these persons will not go to the Church, shall not the Church come to them, offering them innocent recreation in the place of intemperance and its evil consequences? Is it not better for them to read, talk, listen to music, or to a lecture in a pleasantly lighted hall, than drink themselves crazy in a bar-room? The temptations of sin are at every corner—it is not necessary to buy or hire a seat in order to be welcomed into a lighted and cheerful saloon, where drink will seem to drive away care.

But, secondly, we can not fail to see that the churches must

adopt new methods in order to fill the empty seats. The time has passed when every one went to church as a matter of duty, in obedience to a positive divine command. Henceforth they must go because they find themselves happier for going, because they enjoy their church opportunities. They can not any longer be driven to church by obedience to positive divine law ; they must be attracted by love for the Church itself. The Church, then, must be made more attractive, and new methods be found for interesting all classes in its public service. Already, people go to church where they think they get the most good : some, because they enjoy a popular preacher ; some, because they enjoy fine music, noble architecture, solemn ceremonies, and ritual ; some, because it is the only society they have, the only place where they have a part in any social life. The churches of the poor take the place to them of clubs, parties, receptions, and other social entertainments. Besides all this, there is a profound craving in man for worship, for a religious influence. This will never be outgrown. We may confidently rely upon it as sufficient to draw people to church, provided the churches are hospitable, attractive, cheerful, social, and sincerely devout.

Let us plant ourselves firmly and confidently on the principle that Sabbath, Lord's day, church, and religion are made for man—and all are to be so used, so changed and so improved, as to satisfy all his wants. The only rule for keeping Sunday is so to use it as to get the most good out of it. The one test, if we think only of ourselves, of the right and wrong use of the day is, Does it refresh us, soul and body, and leave us better fitted for all our duties ? Whatever does this, is right to be done on Sunday.

Rest and refreshment are the two objects of the day. That amusement is right which rests and refreshes soul and body ; that amusement is wrong which unfits us for the work of the week. This is the difference between recreation and dissipation. One creates our powers anew, the other dissipates and wastes them.

But, while we are seeking what is best for ourselves, we must always bear in mind what is good for others also.

No man lives to himself, nor dies to himself. Pure individualism can not exist unless on Robinson Crusoe's island. No man has a right to withdraw himself from all concern in the interests of his fellow-man. Therefore we should give our influence to those Sunday laws, customs, and institutions which will be best for young and old, rich and poor, wise and ignorant. If we really believe

that happy, quiet, restful Sundays are needed by the people, then, whether we ourselves need them or not we should do what we can to secure them for others. If we believe that Sunday can be made of still greater use to the people than it is now by increasing its methods of furnishing innocent healthful recreation, and by opening the doors of churches, libraries, galleries of art, museums of natural history, reading-rooms, halls for familiar lectures on literary and scientific subjects, and for music, let us all help toward this end each in his own way—considering not only what is good for ourselves, but also what is good for others.

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE.